RELIGIO LAICI

OR A

Laymans Faith.

A

POEM.

Written by Mr. *Dryden.*

Ornari res ipſa negat; contenta doceri——

LONDON,

Printed for *Jacob Tonſon* at the *Judge's Head* in *Chancery-lane*, near *Fleet-ſtreet.*

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

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THE PREFACE.

A Poem with ſo bold a Title, and a Name prefix'd, from which the handling of ſo ſerious a Subject wou'd not be expected, may reaſonably oblige the Author, to ſay ſomewhat in defence both of himſelf, and of his undertaking. In the firſt place, if it be objected to me that being a *Layman*, I ought not to have concern'd my ſelf with Speculations, which belong to the Profeſſion of *Divinity*; I cou'd Anſwer, that perhaps, Laymen, with equal advantages of Parts and Knowledge, are not the moſt incompetent Judges of Sacred things; But in the due ſenſe of my own weakneſs and want of Learning, I plead not this: I pretend not to make my ſelf a Judge of Faith, in others, but onely to make a Confeſſion of my own; I lay no unhallow'd hand upon the Ark; but wait on it, with the Reverence that becomes me at a diſtance: In the next place I will ingenuouſly confeſs, that the helps I have us'd in this ſmall Treatiſe, were many of them taken from the Works of our own Reverend Divines of the Church of *England*; ſo that the Weapons with which I Combat Irreligion, are already Conſecrated; though I ſuppoſe they may be taken down as lawfully as the Sword of *Goliah* was by *David*, when they are to be employed for the common Cauſe, againſt the Enemies of Piety. I intend not by this to intitle them to any of my errours; which, yet, I hope are only thoſe of Charity to Mankind; and ſuch as my *own* Charity has caus'd me to commit, that of *others* may more eaſily excuſe. Being naturally inclin'd to Scepticiſm in Philoſophy, I have no reaſon to impoſe my Opinions, in a Subject which is above it: But whatever they are, I ſubmit them with all reverence to my Mother Church, accounting them no further mine, than as they are Authoriz'd, or at leaſt, uncondemn'd by her. And, indeed, to ſecure my ſelf on this ſide, I have us'd the neceſſary Precaution, of ſhowing this Paper before it was Publiſh'd to a judicious and learned Friend, a Man indefatigably zealous in the ſervice of the Church and State: and whoſe Writings, have highly deſerv'd of both. He was pleas'd, to approve the body of the Diſcourſe, and I hope he is more my Friend, than to do it out of Complaiſance: 'Tis true he had too good a taſt to

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like it all; and amongst some other faults recommended to my second view, what I have written, perhaps too boldly on St. *Athanasius*: which he advised me wholy to omit. I am sensible enough that I had done more *prudently* to have follow'd his opinion: But then I could not have satisfied my self, that I had done honestly not to have written what was my own. It has always been my *thought*, that Heathens, who never did, nor without Miracle cou'd hear of the name of Christ were yet in a possibility of Salvation. Neither will it enter easily into my belief, that before the coming of our Saviour, the whole World, excepting only the Jewish Nation, shou'd lye under the inevitable necessity of everlasting Punishment, for want of that Revelation, which was confin'd to so small a spot of ground as that of *Palæstine*. Among the Sons of *Noah* we read of one onely who was accurs'd; and if a blessing in the ripeness of time was reserv'd for *Japhet*, (of whose Progeny we are,) it seems unaccountable to me, why so many Generations of the same Offspring, as preceeded our Saviour in the Flesh, shou'd be all involv'd in one common condemnation, and yet that their Posterity shou'd be intitled to the hopes of Salvation: As if a Bill of Exclusion had passed only on the Fathers, which debar'd not the Sons from their Succession. Or that so many Ages had been *deliver'd over* to Hell, and so many *reserv'd* for Heaven, and that the Devil had the first choice, and God the next. Truly I am apt to think, that the revealed Religion which was taught by *Noah* to all his Sons, might continue for some Ages in the whole Posterity. That afterwards it was included wholly in the Family of *Sem* is manifest: but when the Progenies of *Cham* and *Japhet* swarm'd into Colonies, and those Colonies were subdivided into many others; in process of time their Descendants lost by little and little the Primitive and Purer Rites of Divine Worship, retaining onely the notion of one Deity; to which succeeding Generations added others: (for Men took their Degrees in those Ages from Conquerours to Gods.) Revelation being thus Eclipsed to almost all Mankind, the light of Nature as the next in Dignity was substituted; and that is it which St. *Paul* concludes to be the Rule of the Heathens; and by which they are hereafter to be judg'd. If my supposition be true, then the consequence which I have assum'd in my Poem may be also true; namely, that Deism, or the Principles of Natural Worship, are onely the faint remnants or dying flames of reveal'd Religion in the Posterity of *Noah*: And that our Modern Philosophers, nay and some of our Philosophising Divines have too much exalted the faculties of our Souls, when they have maintain'd that by their force, mankind has been able to find out that there is one Supream Agent or Intellectual Being which we call God: that Praise and Prayer are his due Worship;

and

and the reſt of thoſe deducements, which I am confident are the remote effects of Revelation, and unatainable by our Diſcourſe, I mean as ſimply conſiderd, and without the benefit of Divine Illumination. So that we have not lifted up our ſelves to God, by the weak Pinions of our Reaſon, but he has been pleaſd to deſcend to us: and what *Socrates* ſaid of him. what Plato writ, and the reſt of the Heathen Philoſophers of ſeveral Nations, is all no more than the Twilight of Revelation, after the Sun of it was ſet in the Race of *Noah*. That there is ſome thing above us, ſome Principle of *motion*, our Reaſon can apprehend, though it cannot diſcover what it is, by its own Vertue. And indeed 'tis very improbable, that we, who by the ſtrength of our faculties cannot enter into the knowledg of any *Being*, not ſo much as of our *own*, ſhould be able to find out by them, that Supream Nature, which we cannot otherwiſe define, than by ſaying it is Infinite; as if Infinite were definable, or Infinity a Subject for our narrow underſtanding. They who wou'd prove Religion by Reaſon, do but weaken the cauſe which they endeavour to ſupport: 'tis to take away the Pillars from our Faith, and to prop it onely with a twig: 'tis to deſign a Tower like that of *Babel*, which if it were poſſible (as it is not) to reach Heaven, would come to nothing by the confuſion of the Workmen. For every man is Building a ſeveral way; impotently conceipted of his own Model, and his own Materials: Reaſon is always ſtriving, and always at a loſs, and of neceſſity it muſt ſo come to paſs, while 'tis exercisd about that which is not its proper object. Let us be content at laſt, to know God, by his own Methods; at leaſt ſo much of him, as he is pleas'd to reveal to us, in the ſacred Scriptures; to apprehend them to be the word of God, is all our Reaſon has to do; for all beyond it is the work of Faith, which is the Seal of Heaven impreſs'd upon our humane underſtanding.

And now for what concerns the Holy Biſhop *Athanaſius*, the Preface of whoſe Creed ſeems inconſiſtent with my opinion; which is, That Heathens may poſſibly be ſav'd; in the firſt place I deſire it may be conſider'd that it is the Preface onely, not the Creed it ſelf, which, (till I am better inform'd) is of too hard a digeſtion for my Charity. 'Tis not that I am ignorant how many ſeveral Texts of Scripture ſeemingly ſupport that Cauſe; but neither am I ignorant how all thoſe Texts may receive a kinder, and more mollified Interpretation. Every man who is read in Church Hiſtory, knows *that* Belief was drawn up after a long conteſtation with *Arrius*, concerning the Divinity of our Bleſſed Saviour, and his being one Subſtance with the Father; and that thus compild, it was ſent abroad among the Chriſtian Churches, as a kind of Teſt, which who-

whoever took, was look'd on as an Orthodox Believer. 'Tis manifeſt from hence, that the Heathen part of the Empire was not concerned in it: for its buſineſs was not to diſtinguiſh betwixt Pagans and Chriſtians, but betwixt Hereticks and true Believers. This, well conſider'd, takes off the heavy weight of Cenſure, which I wou'd willingly avoid from ſo venerable a Man; for if this Proportion, *whoſoever will be ſav'd*, be reſtrained onely, to thoſe to whom it was intended, and for whom it was compos'd, I mean the Chriſtians; then the Anathema, reaches not the Heathens, who had never heard of Chriſt, and were nothing intereſſed in that diſpute. After all, I am far from blaming even that Prefatory addition to the Creed, and as far from cavilling at the continuation of it in the Liturgy of the Church; where on the days appointed, 'tis publickly read: For I ſuppoſe there is the ſame reaſon for it now, in oppoſition to the Socinians, as there was then againſt the Arrians; the one being a Hereſy, which ſeems to have been refin'd out of the other; and with how much more plauſibility of Reaſon it combats our Religion, with ſo much more caution to be avoided: and therefore the prudence of our Church is to be commended which has interpos'd her Authority for the recommendation of this Creed. Yet to ſuch as are grounded in the true belief, thoſe explanatory Creeds, the *Nicene* and this of *Athanaſius* might perhaps be ſpar'd; for what is ſupernatural, will always be a myſtery in ſpight of Expoſition: and for my own part the plain Apoſtles Creed, is moſt ſuitable to my weak underſtanding; as the ſimpleſt diet is the moſt eaſy of Digeſtion.

I have dwelt longer on this Subject than I intended; and longer than, perhaps, I ought; for having laid down, as my Foundation, that the Scripture is a Rule; that in all things needfull to Salvation, it is clear, ſufficient, and ordain'd by God Almighty for that purpoſe, I have left my ſelf no right to interpret obſcure places, ſuch as concern the poſſibility of eternal happineſs to Heathens: becauſe whatſoever is obſcure is concluded not neceſſary to be known.

But, by aſſerting the Scripture to be the Canon of our Faith, I have unavoidably treated to my ſelf two ſorts of Enemies: The Papiſts indeed, more directly, becauſe they have kept the Scripture from us, what they cou'd; and have reſerv'd to themſelves a right of Interpreting what they have deliver'd under the pretence of Infalibility: and the Fanaticks more collaterally, becauſe they have aſſum'd what amounts to an Infallibility, in the private Spirit: and have detorted thoſe Texts of Scripture, which are not neceſſary to Salvation, to the damnable uſes of Sedition, diſturbance and deſtruction of the Civil Government. To begin with the Papiſts, and to ſpeak freely, I think them the leſs dangerous (at leaſt

leaſt in appearance to our preſent State; for not onely the Penal Laws are in Force againſt them, and their number is contemptible; but alſo their Peerage and Commons are excluded from Parliaments, and conſequently thoſe Laws in no probability of being Repeal'd. A General and Uninterrupted Plot of their Clergy, ever ſince the Reformation, I ſuppoſe all Proteſtants believe. For 'tis not reaſonable to think but that ſo many of their Orders, as were outed from their fat poſſeſſions, wou'd endeavour a reentrance againſt thoſe whom they account Hereticks. As for the late deſign, Mr. *Colemans* Letters, for ought I know are the beſt Evidence; and what they diſcover, without wyre-drawing their Sence, or mallcious Gloſſes, all Men of reaſon conclude credible. If there be any thing more than this requir'd of me, I muſt believe it as well as I am able, in ſpight of the Witneſſes, and out of a decent conformity to the Votes of Parliament: For I ſuppoſe the Fanaticks will not allow the private Spirit in this Caſe. Here the Infallibility is at leaſt in one part of the Government; and our underſtandings as well as our wills are repreſented. But to return to the Roman Catholicks, how can we be ſecure from the practice of Jeſuited Papiſts in that Religion? For not two or three of that Order, as ſome of them would impoſe upon us, but almoſt the whole Body of them are of opinion, that their Infallible Maſter has a right over Kings, not onely in Spirituals but Temporals. Not to name *Mariana*, *Bellarmine*, *Emanuel Sa*, *Molina*, *Santaret Simancha*, and at the leaſt twenty others of Foreign Countries; we can produce of our own Nation, *Campian*, and *Doleman* or *Parſons*, beſides many are nam'd whom I have not read, who all of them atteſt this Doctrine, that the Pope can Depoſe and give away the Right of any Sovereign Prince, *ſi vel paulum deflexerit*, if he ſhall never ſo little Warpe: but if he once comes to be Excommunicated, then the Bond of obedience is taken off from Subjects; and they may and ought to drive him like another *Nebuchadnezzar*, *ex hominum Chriſtianorum Dominatu*, from exerciſing Dominion over Chriſtians: and to this they are bound by virtue of Divine Precept, and by all the tyes of Conſcience under no leſs Penalty than Damnation. If they anſwer me (as a Learned Prieſt has lately Written,) that this Doctrine of the Jeſuits is not *de fide*, and that conſequently they are not oblig'd by it, they muſt pardon me, if I think they have ſaid nothing to the purpoſe; for 'tis a Maxim in their Church, where Points of Faith are not decided, and that Doctors are of contrary opinions, they may follow which part they pleaſe; but more ſafely the moſt receiv'd and moſt Authoriz'd. And their Champion *Bellarmine* has told the World in his Apology, that the King of *England* is a Vaſſal to the Pope, *ratione directi Dominii*, and that he

he holds in Villanage of his Roman Landlord. Which is no new claim put in for *England*. Our Chronicles are his Authentique Witnesses, that, King *John* was depos'd by the same Plea, and *Philip Augustus* admitted Tenant. And which makes the more for *Bellarmine*, the French King was again ejected when our King submitted to the Church, and the Crown receiv'd under the sordid Condition of a Vassalage.

'Tis not sufficient for the more moderate and well-meaning Papists, (of which I doubt not there are many) to produce the Evidences of their Loyalty to the late King, and to declare their Innocency in this Plot; I will grant their behaviour in the first, to have been as Loyal and as brave as they desire; and will be willing to hold them excus'd as to the second, (I mean when it comes to my turn, and after my betters; for 'tis a madness to be sober alone, while the Nation continues Drunk:) but that saying of their Father *Cresi*: is still running in my head, that they may be dispens'd with in their Obedience to an Heretick Prince, while the necessity of the times shall oblige them to it: (for that (as another of them tells us,) is onely the effect of Christian Prudence) but when once they shall get power to shake him off, an Heretick is no lawful King, and consequently to rise against him is no Rebellion. I should be glad therefore, that they wou'd follow the advice which was charitably given them by a Reverend Prelate of our Church; namely, that they would joyn in a publick Act of disowning and detesting those Jesuitick Principles; and subscribe to all Doctrines which deny the Popes Authority of Deposing Kings, and releasing Subjects from their Oath of Allegiance: to which I shou'd think they might easily be induc'd, if it be true that this present Pope has condemn'd the Doctrine of King-killing (a Thesis of the Jesuites) amongst others *ex Cathedra*, (as they call it) or in open consistory.

Leaving them, therefore, in so fair a way (if they please themselves) of satisfying all reasonable Men, of their sincerity and good meaning to the Government, I shall make bold to consider that other extream of our Religion, I mean the Fanaticks, or Schismaticks, of the English Church. Since the Bible has been Translated into our Tongue, they have us'd it so, as if their business was not to be sa'vd but to be damnd by its Contents. If we consider onely them, better had it been for the English Nation, that it had still remain'd in the original Greek and Hebrew, or at least in the honest Latine of St. *Jerome*, than that several Texts in it, should have been prevaricated to the destruction of that Government, which put it into so ungrateful hands.

How many Heresies the first Translation of *Tyndal* produced in few years, let my Lord *Herbert*'s History of *Henry* the Eighth inform you; Insomuch that for the gross errours in it, and the great mischiefs it occa-

occasion'd, a Sentence pass'd on the first Edition of the Bible, too shamefull almost to be repeated. After the short Reign of *Edward* the Sixth (who had continued to carry on the Reformation, on other principles than it was begun) every one knows that not onely the chief promoters of that work, but many others, whose Consciences wou'd not dispence with Popery, were forc'd, for fear of persecution, to change Climates: from whence returning at the beginning of Queen *Elizabeth*'s Reign, many of them who had been in *France*, and at *Geneva*, brought back the rigid opinions and imperious discipline of *Calvin*, to graffe upon our Reformation. Which, though they cunningly conceal'd at first, (as well knowing how nauseously that Drug wou'd go down in a lawfull Monarchy, which was prescrib'd for a rebellious Common-wealth) yet they always kept it in reserve; and were never wanting to themselves either in Court or Parliament, when either they had any prospect of a numerous Party of Fanatique Members in the one, or the encouragement of any Favourite in the other, whose Covetousness was gaping at the Patrimony of the Church. They who will consult the Works of our venerable *Hooker*, or the account of his Life, or more particularly the Letter written to him on this Subject, by *George Cranmer*, may see by what gradations they proceeded; from the dislike of Cap and Surplice, the very next step was Admonitions to the Parliament against the whole Government Ecclesiastical: then came out Volumes in English and Latin in defence of their Tenets: and immediately, practices were set on foot to erect their Discipline without Authority. Those not succeeding, Satyre and Rayling was the next: And *Martin Mar-Prelate* (the *Marvel* of those times) was the first Presbyterian Scribler, who sanctify'd Libels and Scurrility to the use of the Good Old Cause. Which was done (says my Authour) upon this account; that (their serious Treatises having been fully answered and refuted) they might compass by rayling what they had lost by reasoning; and when their Cause was sunk in Court and Parliament, they might at least hedge in a stake amongst the Rabble: for to their ignorance all things are Wit which are abusive; but if Church and State were made the Theme, then the Doctoral Degree of Wit was to be taken at *Billingsgate*: even the most Saintlike of the Party, though they durst not excuse this contempt and villifying of the Government, yet were pleas'd, and grin'd at it with a pious smile; and call'd it a judgment of God against the Hierarchy. Thus Sectaries, we may see, were born with teeth, foul-mouth'd and scurrilous from their Infancy: and if Spiritual Pride, Venome, Violence, Contempt of Superiours and Slander had been the marks of Orthodox Belief; the Presbytery and the rest of our Schismaticks, which are their Spawn, were always the most visible Church in the Christian World.

'Tis true, the Government was too ſtrong at that time for a Rebellion; but to ſhew what proficiency they had made in *Calvin*'s School, even *Then* their mouths water'd at it: for two of their gifted Brotherhood (*Hacket* and *Coppinger*) as the Story tells us, got up into a Peaſe-Cart, and harangued the People, to diſpoſe them to an inſurrection, and to eſtabliſh their Diſcipline by force: ſo that however it comes about, that now they celebrate Queen *Elizabeth*'s Birth-night, as that of their Saint and Patroneſs; yet then they were for doing the work of the Lord by Arms againſt her; and in all probability, they wanted but a Fanatique Lord Mayor and two Sheriffs of their Party to have compaſs'd it.

Our venerable *Hooker*, after many Admonitions which he had given them, toward the end of his Preface, breaks out into this Prophetick ſpeech. "*There is in every one of theſe Conſiderations moſt juſt cauſe to fear, "leſt our haſtineſs to embrace a thing of ſo perilous Conſequence* (meaning the "Presbyterian Diſcipline) *ſhould cauſe Poſterity to feel thoſe Evils, which as yet "are more eaſy for us to prevent, than they would be for them to remedy.*

How fatally this *Caſſandra* has foretold we know too well by ſad experience: the Seeds were ſown in the time of Queen *Elizabeth*, the bloudy Harveſt ripened in the Reign of King *Charles* the Martyr: and becauſe all the Sheaves could not be carried off without ſhedding ſome of the looſe Grains, another Crop is too like to follow; nay I fear 'tis unavoidable if the Conventicles be permitted ſtill to ſcatter.

A man may be ſuffer'd to quote an Adverſary to our Religion, when he ſpeaks Truth: and 'tis the obſervation of *Adrimburg* in his Hiſtory of Calviniſm, that where-ever that Diſcipline was planted and imbrac'd, Rebellion, Civil War and Miſery attended it. And how indeed ſhould it happen otherwiſe? Reformation of Church and State has always been the ground of our Diviſions in *England*. While we were Papiſts, our Holy Father rid us, by pretending authority out of the Scriptures to depoſe Princes, when we ſhook off his Authority, the Sectaries furniſh'd themſelves with the ſame Weapons; and out of the ſame Magazine, the Bible. So that the Scriptures, which are in themſelves the greateſt ſecurity of Governours, as commanding expreſs obedience to them, are now turn'd to their deſtruction; and never ſince the Reformation, has there wanted a Text of their interpreting to authorize a Rebel. And 'tis to be noted by the way, that the Doctrines of King-killing and Depoſing, which have been taken up onely by the worſt Party of the Papiſts, the moſt frontleſs Flatterers of the Pope's Authority, have been eſpous'd, defended and are ſtill maintain'd by the whole Body of Nonconformiſts and Republicans. 'Tis but dubbing themſelves the People of God, which 'tis the intereſt of their Preachers to tell them they are, and their own intereſt to believe; and after that, they cannot

dip

dip into the Bible, but one Text or another will turn up for their purpoſe: If they are under Perſecution (as they call it,) then that is a mark of their Election; if they flouriſh, then God works Miracles for their Deliverance, and the Saints are to poſſeſs the Earth.

They may think themſelves to be too roughly handled in this Paper; but I who know beſt how far I could have gone on this Subject, muſt be bold to tell them they are ſpar'd: though at the ſame time I am not ignorant that they interpret the mildneſs of a Writer to them, as they do the mercy of the Government; in the one they think it Fear, and conclude it Weakneſs in the other. The beſt way for them to confute me, is, as I before adviſ'd the Papiſts, to diſclaim their Principles, and renounce their Practices. We ſhall all be glad to think them true Engliſhmen when they obey the King, and true Proteſtants when they conform to the Church Diſcipline.

It remains that I acquaint the Reader, that the Verſes were written for an ingenious young Gentleman my Friend; upon his Tranſlation of *The Critical Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament*, compos'd by the learned Father *Simon*: The Verſes therefore are addreſs'd to the Tranſlatour of that Work, and the ſtyle of them is, what it ought to be, Epiſtolary.

If any one be ſo lamentable a Critique as to require the Smoothneſs, the Numbers and the Turn of Heroick Poetry in this Poem; I muſt tell him, that if he has not read *Horace*, I have ſtudied him, and hope the ſtyle of his Epiſtles is not ill imitated here. The Expreſſions of a Poem, deſign'd purely for Inſtruction, ought to be Plain and Natural, and yet Majeſtick: for here the Poet is preſum'd to be a kind of Law-giver, and thoſe three qualities which I have nam'd are proper to the Legiſlative ſtyle. The Florid, Elevated and Figurative way is for the Paſſions; for Love and Hatred, Fear and Anger, are begotten in the Soul by ſhewing their Objects out of their true proportion; either greater than the Life, or leſs; but Inſtruction is to be given by ſhewing them what they naturally are. A Man is to be cheated into Paſſion, but to be reaſon'd into Truth.

Religio

TO

Mr. Dryden,

On his POEM, called

RELIGIO LAICI.

GReat is the task, and worthy ſuch a Muſe,
To doe Faith right, yet Reaſon diſabuſe.
How chearfully the Soul does take its flight,
On Faith's ſtrong wings guided by Reaſon's light?
But Reaſon does in vain her beams diſplay,
Shewing to th' place, whence firſt ſhe came, the way,
If Peter's *Heirs muſt ſtill hold faſt the Key.*
The houſe which many Manſions ſhou'd contain,
Form'd by the great wiſe Architect in vain,
Of Diſproportion juſtly we accuſe,
If the ſtreight-gate ſtill entrance muſt refuſe.
The onely free enriching Port God made
What ſhamefull Monopoly did invade?
One Factious Company ingroſs'd the Trade.

Thou to the distant Shore hast safely sail'd,
Where the best Pilots have so often fail'd.
Freely we now may buy the Pearl of price,
The happy Land abounds with fragrant Spice,
And nothing is forbidden there but Vice.
Thou best Columbus *to the unknown World!*
Mountains of Doubt that in thy way were hurld,
Thy generous Faith has bravely overcome,
And made Heaven truly our familiar home.
Let Crowds impossibilities receive,
Who cannot think, ought not to disbelieve.
Let 'em pay Tithes, and hud-wink'd go to Heaven,
But sure the Quaker *cou'd not be forgiven,*
Had not the Clerk who hates Lay-policy
Found out, to countervail the Injury,
Swearing, *a trade of which they are not free.*
Too long has captiv'd Reason been enslav'd,
By Visions scar'd, and airy Phantasms brav'd,
Listning t' each proud Enthusiastick Fool,
Pretending Conscience, but designing Rule;
Whilst Law, Form, Interest, Ignorance, Design,
Did in the holy Cheat together joyn.
Like vain Astrologers gazing on the Skyes,
We fell, and did not dare to trust our Eyes.
'Tis time at last to fix the trembling Soul,
And by thy Compass to point out the Pole;
All men agree in what is to be done,
And each Man's Heart his Table is of Stone,

Where

Where he the God-writ Character may view:
Were it as needfull, Faith had been ſo too.
Oh, that our greateſt fault were humble Doubt!
And that we were more Juſt, though leſs Devout;
What reverence ſhou'd we pay thy ſacred Rhimes,
Who in theſe Factious too-believing Times
Haſt taught us to obey, and to diſtruſt:
Yet to our ſelves, our King, and God, prove juſt.
Thou wantſt not Praiſe from an enſuring Friend,
The Poor to Thee on double Intereſt lend.
So ſtrong thy Reaſons, and ſo clear thy Senſe,
They bring, like Day, their own bright Evidence:
Yet whilſt myſterious Truths to light you bring,
And heavenly things in heavenly numbers ſing,
The joyfull Younger Choir may clap the Wing.

To Mr. *DRYDEN*, on *Religio Laici.*

'Tis nobly done, a Layman's Creed profeſt,
When all our Faith of late hung on a Prieſt;
His doubtfull words like Oracles receiv'd,
And when we could not underſtand, believ'd.

Trium-

Triumphant Faith now takes a nobler course,
'Tis gentle, but resists intruding force:
Weak Reason may pretend an awfull sway,
And Consistories charge her to obey;
(Strange Nonsense to confine the sacred Dove,
And narrow Rules prescribe how he shall love,
And how upon the barren Waters move.)
But she rejects and scorns their proud Pretence,
And whilst those groveling things depend on Sense;
She mounts on certain wings and flys on high,
And looks upon a dazling Mystery,
With fixt, and steddy, and an Eagle's Eye.
Great King of Verse, that dost instruct and please,
As Orpheus *soften'd the rude Savages:*
And gently freest us from a double Care,
The bold Socinian, and the Papal Chair:
Thy Judgment is correct, thy Fancy young,
Thy Numbers, as thy generous faith, are strong:
Whilst through dark Prejudice they force their way,
Our Souls shake off the Night and view the Day.
We live secure from mad Enthusiasts Rage,
And fond Tradition now grown blind with Age.
Let factious and ambitious Souls repine,
Thy Reason's strong, and generous thy Design,
And allways to doe well is onely thine.

Tho. Creech.

Religio Laici.

DIM, as the borrow'd beams of Moon and Stars
To *lonely, weary, wandring* Travellers,
Is *Reaſon* to the *Soul*: And as on high,
Thoſe rowling Fires *diſcover* but the Sky
Not light us *here*; So *Reaſon's* glimmering Ray,
Was lent, not to *aſſure* our *doubtfull* way,
But *guide* us upward to a *better Day*.
And as thoſe nightly Tapers diſappear
When Day's bright Lord aſcends our Hemiſphere;
So pale grows *Reaſon* at *Religions* ſight;
So *dyes*, and ſo *diſſolves* in *Supernatural Light*.

Some few, whose Lamp shone brighter, have been led
From Cause to Cause, to *Natures* secret head;
And found that *one first principle* must be:
But *what*, or *who*, that *UNIVERSAL HE*;
Whether some *Soul* incompassing this Ball
Unmade, *unmov'd*; yet *making*, *moving All*;
Or various *Atom's*, interfering Dance
Leapt into *Form*, (the Noble work of *Chance*;)
Or this great *All* was from *Eternity*;
Not ev'n the *Stagirite* himself could see;
And *Epicurus Guess'd* as well as He:
As *blindly grop'd* they for a *future State*;
As *rashly Judg'd* of *Providence* and *Fate*:
But least of all could their Endeavours find
What most concern'd the good of Humane kind:
For *Happiness* was never to be found;
But vanish'd from 'em, like Enchanted ground.

Opinions of the several Sects of Philosophers concerning the Summum Bonum.

One

One thought *Content* the Good to be enjoy'd:
This, every little *Accident* deſtroy'd:
The *wiſer Madmen* did for *Vertue* toyl:
A Thorny, or at beſt a barren Soil:
In *Pleaſure* ſome their glutton Souls would ſteep;
But found their Line too ſhort, the Well too deep;
And leaky Veſſels which no *Bliſs* cou'd keep.
Thus, *anxious Thoughts* in *endleſs Circles* roul,
Without a *Centre* where to fix the *Soul:*
In this wilde Maze their vain Endeavours end.
How can the *leſs* the *Greater* comprehend?
Or *finite Reaſon* reach *Infinity?*
For what cou'd *Fathom GOD* were *more* than *He.*

The *Deiſt* thinks he ſtands on firmer ground; *Syſtem of Deiſme.*
Cries εὕρηκα: the mighty Secret's found:
God is that *Spring* of *Good*; *Supreme*, and *Beſt*;
We, made to *ſerve*, and in that Service *bleſt*;

If ſo, ſome *Rules* of Worſhip muſt be given,
Diſtributed alike to all by Heaven:
Elſe *God* were *partial*, and to *ſome* deny'd
The Means his Juſtice ſhou'd for *all* provide.
This *general Worſhip* is to *PRAISE*, and *PRAY*:
One part to *borrow* Bleſſings, one to *pay*:
And when frail Nature ſlides into *Offence*,
The *Sacrifice* for *Crimes* is *Penitence*.
Yet, ſince th' Effects of Providence, we find
Are variouſly diſpens'd to Humane kind;
That *Vice Triumphs*, and *Vertue ſuffers* here,
(A Brand that Sovereign Juſtice cannot bear;)
Our Reaſon prompts us to a *future* State:
The *laſt Appeal* from *Fortune*, and from *Fate*:
Where God's all-righteous ways will be declar'd;
The *Bad* meet *Puniſhment*, the *Good*, *Reward*.

Thus Man by his own ſtrength to Heaven wou'd ſoar: *Of Reveal'd Religion.*
And wou'd not be Oblig'd to God for more.
Vain, wretched Creature, how art thou miſled
To think thy Wit theſe God-like Notions bred!
Theſe Truths are not the product of thy Mind,
But dropt from Heaven, and of a Nobler kind.
Reveal'd Religion firſt inform'd thy Sight,
And *Reaſon* ſaw not, till *Faith* ſprung the Light.
Hence all thy *Natural Worſhip* takes the *Source*:
'Tis *Revelation* what thou thinkſt *Diſcourſe*.
Elſe, how com'ſt *Thou* to ſee theſe truths ſo clear,
Which ſo obſcure to *Heathens* did appear?
Not *Plato* theſe, nor *Ariſtotle* found:
Nor He whoſe Wiſedom *Oracles* renown'd. *Socrates.*
Haſt thou a Wit ſo deep, or ſo ſublime,
Or canſt thou lower dive, or higher climb?

Canſt *Thou*, by *Reaſon*, more of *God-head* know
Than *Plutarch*, *Seneca*, or *Cicero*?
Thoſe Gyant Wits, in happyer Ages born,
(When *Arms*, and *Arts* did *Greece* and *Rome* adorn)
Knew no ſuch *Syſteme*: no ſuch Piles cou'd raiſe
Of *Natural Worſhip*, built on *Pray'r* and *Praiſe*,
To One ſole GOD.
Nor did Remorſe, to Expiate Sin, preſcribe:
But ſlew their fellow Creatures for a Bribe:
The guiltleſs *Victim* groan'd for their Offence;
And *Cruelty*, and *Blood* was *Penitence*.
If *Sheep* and *Oxen* cou'd Attone for Men
Ah! at how cheap a rate the *Rich* might Sin!
And great Oppreſſours might Heavens Wrath beguile
By offering his own Creatures for a Spoil!

Dar'ſt thou, poor Worm, offend *Infinity*?
And muſt the Terms of Peace be given by *Thee*?

Then

Then *Thou* art *Juſtice* in the *laſt Appeal*;
Thy eaſie God inſtructs Thee to *rebell:*
And, like a King remote, and weak, muſt take
What Satisfaction *Thou* art pleas'd to make.

But if there be a *Pow'r* too *Juſt*, and *ſtrong*
To wink at *Crimes*, and bear unpuniſh'd *Wrong*;
Look humbly upward, ſee his Will diſcloſe
The *Forfeit* firſt, and then the *Fine* impoſe:
A *Mulct thy* Poverty cou'd never pay
Had not *Eternal Wiſedom* found the way:
And with Cœleſtial Wealth ſupply'd thy Store:
His Juſtice makes the *Fine*, *his Mercy* quits the *Score*.
See God deſcending in thy Humane Frame;
Th' *offended*, ſuff'ring in th' *Offenders* Name:
All thy Miſdeeds to him imputed ſee,
And all his Righteouſneſs devolv'd on thee:

For

For granting we have Sin'd, and that th' offence
Of *Man*, is made againſt *Omnipotence*,
Some Price, that bears *proportion*, muſt be paid
And *Infinite* with *Infinite* be weigh'd.
See then the *Deiſt loſt*: *Remorſe* for *Vice*,
Not paid, or *paid*, *inadequate* in price:
What farther means can *Reaſon* now direct,
Or what Relief from *humane Wit* expect?
That ſhews us *ſick*; and ſadly are we ſure
Still to be *Sick*, till *Heav'n* reveal the *Cure*:
Itſhen *Heaven's Will* muſt needs be underſtood,
(Which muſt, if we want *Cure*, and *Heaven*, be *Good*)
Let all Records of *Will reveal'd* be ſhown;
With *Scripture*, all in equal ballance thrown,
And *our one Sacred Book* will be *That one*.

Proof needs not here, for whether we compare
That Impious, Idle, Superſtitious Ware

Of

Of *Rites*, *Luſtrations*, *Offerings*, (which before,
In various Ages, various Countries bore)
With *Chriſtian Faith* and *Vertues*, we ſhall find
None anſw'ring the great ends of humane kind
But *This one Rule of Life: That* ſhews us beſt
How *God* may be *appeas'd*, and *Mortals bleſt*.
Whether from length of *Time* its worth we draw,
The *World* is ſcarce more *Ancient* than the *Law*:
Heav'ns early Care preſcrib'd for every Age;
Firſt, in the *Soul*, and after, in the *Page*.
Or, whether more abſtractedly we look,
Or on the *Writers*, or the *written Book*,
Whence, but from *Heav'n*, cou'd men unskill'd in Arts,
In ſeveral Ages born, in ſeveral parts,
Weave ſuch *agreeing Truths?* or *how*, or *why*
Shou'd *all* conſpire to cheat us with a *Lye?*
Unask'd their *Pains*, *ungratefull* their *Advice*,
Starving their *Gain*, and *Martyrdom* their *Price*.

If on the Book it ſelf we caſt our view,
Concurrent Heathens prove the Story *True:*
The *Doctrine, Miracles*; which muſt convince,
For *Heav'n* in *Them* appeals to *humane Senſe:*
And though they *prove* not, they *Confirm* the Cauſe,
When what is *Taught* agrees with *Natures Laws.*

Then for the *Style*; *Majeſtick* and *Divine*,
It ſpeaks no leſs than God in every Line:
Commanding words; whoſe *Force* is ſtill the ſame
As the firſt *Fiat* that produc'd our Frame.
All Faiths *beſide*, or did by *Arms* aſcend;
Or *Senſe* indulg'd has made *Mankind* their *Friend:*
This *onely* Doctrine does our *Luſts* oppoſe:
Unfed by Natures Soil, in which it grows;
Croſs to our *Intereſts*, curbing Senſe, and Sin;
Oppreſs'd without, and undermin'd within,

It thrives through pain; its own Tormentours tires;
And with a ſtubborn patience ſtill aſpires.
To what can *Reaſon* ſuch Effects aſſign
Tranſcending *Nature*, but to *Laws Divine?*
Which in that Sacred Volume are contain'd;
Sufficient, clear, and for that uſe ordain'd.

Objection of the Deiſt.

But ſtay: the *Deiſt* here will urge anew,
No *Supernatural Worſhip* can be *True:*
Becauſe a *general Law* is that alone
Which muſt to *all*, and every *where* be known:
A Style ſo large as not *this* Book can claim
Nor ought that bears *reveal'd* Religions *Name.*
'Tis ſaid the ſound of a *Meſſiah's Birth*
Is gone through all the habitable Earth:
But ſtill that Text muſt be confin'd alone
To what was *Then* inhabited, and known:

And what Proviſion cou'd from *thence* accrue
To *Indian* Souls, and Worlds diſcover'd *New*?
In other parts it helps, that Ages paſt,
The Scriptures there were *known*, and were *imbrac'd*,
Till Sin ſpread once again the Shades of Night:
What's that to theſe who never *ſaw* the Light?

The Objection answer'd.

Of all Objections this indeed is chief
To ſtartle Reaſon, ſtagger frail Belief:
We grant, 'tis true, that Heav'n from humane Senſe
Has hid the ſecret paths of *Providence*:
But *boundleſs Wiſedom, boundleſs Mercy*, may
Find ev'n for thoſe *be-wildred* Souls, a *way*:
If from his *Nature Foes* may Pity claim,
Much more may *Strangers* who ne'er heard his *Name*.
And though *no Name* be for *Salvation* known,
But that of his *Eternal Sons* alone;

Who

Who knows how far tranſcending Goodneſs can
Extend the *Merits* of *that Son* to *Man*?
Who knows what *Reaſons* may his *Mercy* lead;
Or *Ignorance invincible* may plead?
Not onely *Charity* bids hope the *beſt*,
But *more* the great Apoſtle has expreſt:
That, if the Gentiles, (whom no Law inſpir'd,)
By Nature did what was by *Law requir'd*;
They, who the written Rule had never known,
Were to themſelves both Rule and Law alone:
To Natures plain indictment they ſhall plead;
And, by their Conſcience, be condemn'd or freed.
Moſt righteous Doom! becauſe a *Rule reveal'd*
Is *none* to *Thoſe*, from whom it was *conceal'd*.
Then thoſe who follow'd *Reaſons* Dictates right;
Liv'd up, and lifted high their *Natural Light*;
With *Socrates* may ſee their Maker's Face,
While Thouſand *Rubrick-Martyrs* want a place.

Nor does it baulk my *Charity*, to find
Th' *Egyptian* Biſhop of another mind:
For, though his *Creed Eternal Truth* contains,
'Tis hard for *Man* to doom to *endleſs pains*
All who believ'd not all, his Zeal requir'd;
Unleſs he firſt cou'd prove he was inſpir'd.
Then let us either think he meant to ſay
This Faith, where *publiſh'd*, was the onely way;
Or elſe conclude that, *Arius* to confute,
The good old Man, too eager in diſpute,
Flew high; and as his *Chriſtian* Fury roſe
Damn'd all for *Hereticks* who durſt *oppoſe*.

Digreſſion to the Tranſlatour of Father Simon's Critical Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament.

Thus far my Charity this path has try'd;
(A much unskilfull, but well meaning guide:)
Yet what they are, ev'n theſe crude thoughts were bred
By reading that, which better thou haſt read.

Thy

Thy Matchleſs Author's work: which thou, my Friend,
By well tranſlating better doſt commend:
Thoſe youthfull hours which, of thy Equals moſt
In *Toys* have *ſquander'd*, or in *Vice* have *loſt*,
Thoſe hours haſt thou to Nobler uſe employ'd;
And the ſevere Delights of Truth enjoy'd.
Witneſs this weighty Book, in which appears
The crabbed Toil of many thoughtfull years,
Spent by thy Authour, in the Sifting Care
Of *Rabbins* old Sophiſticated Ware
From Gold Divine; which he who well can ſort
May afterwards make *Algebra* a Sport.
A Treaſure, which if *Country-Curates* buy,
They *Junius*, and *Tremellius* may defy:
Save pains in various readings, and Tranſlations;
And without *Hebrew* make moſt learn'd quotations.
A Work ſo full with various Learning fraught,
So nicely pondred, yet ſo ſtrongly wrought,

As

As Natures height and Arts laſt hand requir'd:
As much as Man cou'd compaſs, uninſpir'd.
Where we may ſee what *Errours* have been made
Both in the *Copiers* and *Tranſlaters Trade:*
How *Jewiſh*, *Popiſh*, Intereſts have prevail'd,
And where *Infallibility* has *fail'd.*

For ſome, who have his ſecret meaning ghes'd,
Have found our Authour not too *much* a *Prieſt:*
For *Faſhion-ſake* he ſeems to have recourſe
To *Pope*, and *Councils*, and *Traditions* force:
But he that *old* Traditions cou'd ſubdue,
Cou'd not but find the weakneſs of the *New:*
If *Scripture*, though deriv'd from *heav'nly birth*,
Has been but careleſly preſerv'd on *Earth*;
If *God's own People*, who of *God* before
Knew what we know, and had been promis'd more,

In

In fuller Terms, of Heaven's aſſiſting Care,
And who did neither *Time*, nor *Study* ſpare
To keep this Book *untainted*, *unperplext*;
Let in groſs *Errours* to corrupt the *Text*:
Omitted *paragraphs*, embroyl'd the *Senſe*;
With vain *Traditions* ſtopt the gaping Fence,
Which every common hand pull'd up with eaſe:
What Safety from ſuch *bruſhwood-helps* as theſe?
If *written words* from time are not ſecur'd,
How can we think have *oral Sounds* endur'd?
Which *thus* tranſmitted, if *one* Mouth has fail'd,
Immortal Lyes on *Ages* are intail'd:
And that ſome ſuch have been, is prov'd too plain;
If we conſider *Intereſt*, *Church*, and *Gain*.

Oh but ſays one, *Tradition* ſet aſide,
Where can we hope for an *unerring Guid*?

Of the Infallibility of Tradition, in General.

For since th' *original* Scripture has been lost,
All Copies *disagreeing*, *maim'd* the *text*,
Or *Christian Faith* can have no *certain* ground,
Or *Truth* in *Church Tradition* must be found.

Such an *Omniscient* Church we wish indeed:
'Twere worth *Both Testaments*, and cast in the *Creed*:
But if *this Mother* be a *Guid* so sure,
As can all *doubts resolve*, all *truth secure*,
Then her *Infallibility*, as well
Where Copies are *corrupt*, or *lame*, can tell;
Restore *lost Canon* with as little pains,
As *truly explicate* what still *remains*:
Which yet no *Council* dare *pretend* to do;
Unless like *Esdras*, they cou'd *write* it new:
Strange Confidence, still to *interpret* true,
Yet not be sure that all they have explain'd,
Is in the blest *Original* contain'd.

More

More Safe, and much more modest 'tis, to say
God wou'd not leave Mankind without a way:
And that the *Scriptures*, though not *every where*
Free from Corruption, or intire, or clear,
Are uncorrupt, sufficient, clear, intire,
In *all* things which our needfull *Faith* require.
If *others* in the *same Glass better* see,
'Tis for *Themselves* they look, but not for *me*:
For *MY* Salvation must its Doom receive,
Not from what *OTHERS*, but what *I* believe.

Must *all Tradition* then be set aside?
This to affirm were Ignorance, or Pride.
Are there not many points, some needfull sure
To saving Faith, that Scripture leaves obscure?
Which every Sect will wrest a several way
(For what *one* Sect Interprets, *all* Sects *may*:)

Objection in behalf of Tradition, urg'd by Father Simon.

We hold, and say we prove from Scripture plain,
That *Christ* is GOD; the bold *Socinian*
From the *same* Scripture urges he's but *MAN*.
Now what Appeal can end th' important Suit;
Both parts *talk* loudly, but the *Rule* is *mute*?

Shall I speak plain, and in a Nation free
Assume an honest *Layman's Liberty*?
I think (according to my little Skill,)
To my own Mother-Church submitting still)
That many have been sav'd, and many may,
Who never heard this Question brought in play.
Th'*unletter'd* Christian, who believes in *gross*,
Plods on to *Heaven*; and ne'er is at a loss:
For the *Streight-gate* wou'd be made *streighter* yet,
Were *none* admitted there but men of *Wit*.
The few, by Nature form'd, with Learning fraught,
Born to instruct, as others to be taught,

Must

Muſt Study well the Sacred Page; and ſee
Which Doctrine, this, or that, does beſt agree
With the whole Tenour of the Work Divine:
And plainlyeſt points to Heaven's reveal'd Deſign:
Which Expoſition flows from *genuine Senſe*;
And which is *forc'd* by *Wit* and *Eloquence.*
Not that Traditions parts are uſeleſs here:
When general, old, diſintereſt'd and clear:
That Ancient Fathers thus expound the Page,
Gives *Truth* the reverend Majeſty of *Age*:
Confirms its force, by biding every *Teſt*;
For beſt *Authority's* next *Rules* are *beſt.*
And ſtill the nearer to the Spring we go
More limpid, more unſoyl'd the Waters flow.
Thus, *firſt Traditions* were a proof alone;
Cou'd we be *certain* ſuch they *were*, ſo *known*:
But ſince ſome Flaws in long deſcent may be,
They make not *Truth* but *Probability.*

Even

Even *Arius* and *Pelagius* durſt provoke
To what the *Centuries preceding* ſpoke.
Such difference is there in an oft-told Tale:
But Truth by its own Sinews will prevail.
Tradition written therefore more commends
Authority, than what from *Voice* deſcends:
And this, as perfect as its kind can be,
Rouls down to us the Sacred Hiſtory:
Which, from the *Univerſal Church receiv'd*,
Is *try'd*, and *after*, for its *ſelf* believ'd.

The Second Objection.

The partial *Papiſts* wou'd infer from hence
Their Church, in laſt reſort, ſhou'd Judge the *Senſe*.

Anſwer to the Objection.

But firſt they wou'd aſſume, with wondrous Art,
Themſelves to be the *whole*, who are but *part*
Of that vaſt Frame, the Church; yet grant they were
The handers down, can they from thence infer

A right t' interpret? or wou'd they alone
Who brought the Present, claim it for their own?
The *Book*'s a *Common Largess* to *Mankind*;
Not more for *them*, than *every* Man design'd:
The *welcome News* is in the *Letter* found;
The *Carrier*'s not Commission'd to *expound*.
It *speaks* it *Self*, and what it does contain,
In all things *needfull* to be *known*, is *plain*.

In times o'ergrown with Rust and Ignorance,
A gainfull Trade their Clergy did advance:
When want of Learning kept the *Laymen* low,
And none but *Priests* were *Authoriz'd* to *know*:
When what small Knowledge was in them did dwell;
And he a *God* who cou'd but *Reade* or *Spell*;
Then *Mother Church* did mightily prevail:
She parcel'd out the Bible by *retail*:

But

But ſtill *expounded* what She *ſold* or *gave*;
To keep it in *her Power* to *Damn* and *Save*:
Scripture was *ſcarce*, and as the Market went,
Poor *Laymen* took *Salvation* on *Content*;
As needy men take Money, good or bad:
God's Word they had not, but the *Prieſts* they had.
Yet, whate'er *falſe Conveyances* they made,
The *Lawyer* ſtill was *certain* to be paid.
In thoſe dark times they learn'd their knack ſo well,
That by long uſe they grew *Infallible*:
At laſt, a knowing Age began t'enquire
If *they* the *Book*, or *That* did *them* inſpire:
And, making narrower ſearch they found, thô late,
That what they thought the *Prieſt*'s, was *Their* Eſtate:
Taught by the *Will produc'd*, (the written Word)
How long they had been *cheated* on *Record*.
Then, every man who ſaw the Title fair,
Claim'd a Child's part, and put in for a Share:

Conſulted

Conſulted Soberly his private good;
And ſav'd himſelf as cheap as e'er he cou'd.

'Tis true, my Friend, (and far be Flattery hence)
This good had full as bad a Conſequence:
The Book thus put in every vulgar hand,
Which each preſum'd he beſt cou'd underſtand,
The *Common Rule* was made the *common Prey*;
And at the mercy of the *Rabble* lay.
The tender Page with horney Fiſts was gaul'd;
And he was gifted moſt that loudeſt baul'd:
The *Spirit* gave the *Doctoral Degree:*
And every member of a *Company*
Was of *his Trade*, and of the *Bible free.*
Plain *Truths* enough for needfull *uſe* they found;
But men wou'd ſtill be itching to *expound:*
Each was ambitious of th' obſcureſt place,
No meaſure ta'n from *Knowledge*, all from *GRACE.*

Study and *Pains* were now no more their Care;
Texts were explain'd by *Fasting*, and by *Prayer*:
This was the Fruit the *private Spirit* brought;
Occasion'd by *great Zeal*, and *little Thought*.
While Crouds unlearn'd, with rude Devotion warm,
About the Sacred Viands buz and swarm:
The *Fly-blown Text* creates a *crawling Brood*;
And turns to *Maggots* what was meant for *Food*.
A Thousand daily Sects rise up, and dye;
A Thousand more the perish'd Race supply:
So all we make of Heavens discover'd Will
Is, not to have it, or to use it ill.
The Danger's much the same, on several Shelves
If *others* wreck *us*, or *we* wreck our *selves*.

What then remains, but, waving each Extreme,
The Tides of Ignorance, and Pride to stem?

Neither ſo rich a Treaſure to forgo;
Nor proudly ſeek beyond our pow'r to know:
Faith is not built on diſquiſitions vain;
The things we *muſt* believe, are *few*, and *plain*:
But ſince men *will* believe more than they *need*;
And every man will make *himſelf* a Creed:
In doubtfull queſtions 'tis the ſafeſt way
To learn what unſuſpected Ancients ſay:
For 'tis not likely *we* ſhou'd higher Soar
In ſearch of Heav'n, than *all the Church before*:
Nor can we be deceiv'd, unleſs we ſee
The *Scripture*, and the *Fathers diſagree*.
If after all, they ſtand ſuſpected ſtill,
(For no man's Faith depends upon his Will;)
'Tis ſome Relief, that points not clearly known,
Without much hazard may be let alone:
And, after hearing what our Church can ſay,
If ſtill our Reaſon runs another way,

That

That private Reason 'tis more Just to curb,
Than by Disputes the publick Peace disturb.
For points obscure are of small use to learn:
But *Common quiet* is *Mankind's concern.*

Thus have I made my own Opinions clear:
Yet neither Praise expect, nor Censure fear:
And this unpolish'd, rugged Verse, I chose;
As fittest for Discourse, and nearest Prose:
For, while from *Sacred Truth* I do not swerve,
Tom Sternhold's, or *Tom Sha—ll's Rhimes* will serve.

FINIS.